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Fernwood adds to railway garden

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NILES -- Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve's railway garden opens for its fourth season on Tuesday at 13988 Range Line Road

advertisement



This season, a replica of the Niles City Hall will be added to Fernwood's permanent collection of scale models of local attractions, which include the Niles Train Depot, the St. Joseph Lighthouse, Buchanan's Pears Mill and the University of Notre Dame's Golden Dome.

Built as the Chapin Mansion, the Niles City Hall is an example of Victorian Queen Anne architecture and was built by Henry A. Chapin from 1882-1884. In 1932, the family sold the mansion to the city of Niles, stipulating that the mansion be open to visitors.

Buildings in the railway garden are reproduced using all natural materials. For example, the new Niles City Hall building has an ash bark roof, an oak bark foundation and ornamentation of other tree barks. The windows are represented with red-stained willow and winged euonymus twigs, the tower is made with a vine-choked tree branch, and the chimneys are contorted witch hazel and acorn caps. Other natural components include twigs, berries, seed pods, cones, vines, and shelf fungus.

The railway exhibit and buildings were designed especially for Fernwood by botanical architect and naturalist Paul Busse and his artists at Applied Imagination in Alexandria, Ky.

Fernwood's railway garden contains four G-scale trains that run on a total of 510 feet of track.

The railway garden also will be the main attraction at Fernwood on May 12 for National Train Day.

The railway exhibit is free with paid Fernwood admission. Fernwood members are free.

May hours are from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and noon to 6 p.m. Sundays.

For more information, call 269-695-6491 or visit the website fernwoodbotanical.org.

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